

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Ralph DLG Torres  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
P.O. Box 10007  
Saipan, MP 96950

Governor Torres:

Thousands of Marianas workers are unemployed, underemployed, or furloughed because of the coronavirus, yet they are still not receiving the unemployment benefits Congress made available in the CARES Act, which you are responsible for paying out.

Seven weeks ago, Congress passed the CARES Act, U.S. Public Law 116-136. Five weeks ago, the Commonwealth and the U.S. Department of Labor signed the implementation agreement. Clearly, however, some further action must still be needed on the federal side, by the Commonwealth, or both.

I negotiated to make Marianas workers eligible for the combined \$942 weekly benefit under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation programs the CARES Act created, even though the Commonwealth has never enacted an unemployment insurance system, which is the basis for administering these programs in other states and territories.

I thought the experience of the Commonwealth and the U.S. Department of Labor after Super Typhoon Yutu in administering the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance program, on which the pandemic program is modeled, would mean quick implementation.

Please, let me know if federal inaction is the cause of delay, so that I can help. Or, please, explain why the unemployed in the Marianas are still waiting for assistance, when workers elsewhere in the United States are receiving the aid Congress is making available.

I do not have to tell you that for many in the Marianas, who live paycheck to paycheck, being unemployed means they cannot buy food or meet the costs of rent and utilities. They need help now.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN  
Member of Congress

cc: Members, Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature